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AP English

Gender Essay

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Gender Roles

Fairytales are the classic way for young children to learn valuable lessons through entertainment. Disney movies are a part of almost any person’s childhood, and most of these movies follow the same format, all involving a woman, a man, and some type of evil. In *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*’ case, there is a princess, a prince, and a malicious stepmother. Kids and adults everywhere enjoy these movies because on the surface, they seem like whole-hearted family fun. But when closely analyzing *Snow White* and many other Disney movies, a person might see that there may be an underlying message presented to the viewers. In *Snow White*, gender roles play a part in influencing society.

Snow White, the title character, is an innocent and somewhat naive princess. Although she is kind hearted and a fairly good person, she cannot escape the wrath of her evil step-mother, the queen. From this point on, Snow White becomes the helpless princess, trying to escape from the immoral queen. In the movie, Snow White falls into the traditional housekeeper role. Once she starts living with the seven dwarfs, she cleans and cooks for them (Maio). Snow White stays in the house all day, waiting for her prince to save her. She will do anything for the men in the house, the dwarfs, because they are giving her a place to stay safe from the wicked queen. The female is essentially working for the man, which is a typical stereotype. Although Snow White has the largest role in the movie, viewers cannot forget how most of her thoughts are centered on finding her true love, the prince. Throughout the movie, Snow White is subservient to people around her, and that does not teach an appropriate message.

In *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, the prince fits into the basic definition of a prince in most fairytales, charming and brave. Although the prince is not in the movie very much, his role is significant because he ends up rescuing the princess. The prince has a typical role by being the hero who saves the day. This perpetuates the fact that most Disney movies make the men noble heroes. Without the prince, Snow White will just wait for the day her true love comes to save her. She is not trying to work out her own problems, but is just waiting for a man to swoop in and keep her protected. Some people may argue that there is nothing wrong with relying somewhat on another person, but the way in which Snow White is almost helpless without her prince is a problem (Karlin). The prince is valiant and kind, which are obviously good traits to have, but in the movie, the prince takes away from Snow White’s independence and leadership.

Another gender role in *Snow White* is the adult, who is the stepmother and queen. She is the authority figure because she is able to manipulate and control Snow White. The queen also has the role of the stepmother, who is usually portrayed as unkind and immoral. Her role is definitely a stereotype because it sends out the message that all stepmothers are horrible and always trying to ruin someone else’s life. The queen is superficial, since she wants to be the “prettiest of them all,” and she will do anything to get rid of Snow White. Her role is predictable and is the strongest example of a stereotype in the movie.

Overall, the Disney film industry is giving young children the wrong message. *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* seems to influence girls in particular because it shows a woman who waits around for her prince charming, and that is it okay to be submissive to other people. Snow White is sometimes shown as capable, so it would be wrong to say that children should not watch the movie at all. It is also true that when *Snow White* came out, the roles of women were a lot different than they are today. Even so, a lot of children still watch Disney Movies, and *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* shows only stereotypical roles of men and women. In the movie, the stereotypes are that the woman cooks and cleans and the man saves the day. It is not to say that children should not be allowed to watch and enjoy Disney movies such as *Snow White*, but parents need to make sure that their children know the difference between a false story and reality. The movie industry in general has a lot to do with the gender roles that are created in our society. People will start to believe what movies tell them if the movies constantly send out messages about stereotypical roles in men and women.

Works Cited

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